

Former Jackson Co. ATC Student Realizing a Dream Thanks to Her ATC Instructor and the Kentucky School of Craft

Some people have the luxury of just knowing what they want to do in life while others wait for that one magic moment to happen that will lead them in the right direction. Valerie Lee was one of those.

The former Jackson Co. ATC student didn't have any idea of what she would do with her life upon entering high school, but she knew she wanted to attend the ATC. After meeting Wood Technology Instructor Mark Taylor, Valerie's magic moment began to materialize.



“...my teacher made the difference.”
Valerie Lee



“I saw a quality in Valerie that made me think she would really excel at wood working, so I encouraged her to give it a try,” said Taylor.

Although she was unsure if this was something she wanted to do, Valerie heeded the suggestion by Taylor and gave it a try.

“I didn’t think I would like the class, but after using the hand router the first day and hearing my teacher say I did a good job, it pretty much sealed the deal,” said Valerie.

From that point on, a snowball affect took over and Valerie began to shine in her wood technology program.

“She found acceptance here, even though it’s a male dominated field and began enjoying the class,” said Taylor.

“Enjoying the class” proved to be an understatement because within two months Valerie had taken scrap wood and constructed a three-piece computer desk.

“We are conservative and try to use everything,” Valerie said with a laugh.

“I asked her to come up with a design for the desk; making it useful in what we need for the classroom and she did it,” said Taylor.

The four-week project intimidated Valerie at first. “I didn’t want to do it because I didn’t think I could, but my teacher made the difference,” she said. “If it hadn’t been for Mr. Taylor, I wouldn’t have continued.

The next big step for Valerie came by way of a workshop at the Kentucky School of Craft in Hindman; a school devoted to the task of bringing artisans and crafts people from novice to professionals.

The workshop was actually a wood turning seminar hosted by Jackson Co. local expert Jack Fifield, who along with his wife Linda have become well known all over the region for their crafting abilities and teaching expertise.

“Jack taught me how to set up and make a finished product using a lathe,” said Valerie. “I also got to meet the dean of students at the school, Tim Glotzbach, who talked to me about enrolling.”

At this point, her future plans were beginning to take shape. The next time she visited the School of Craft would be on a field trip with her ATC class. This gave her an opportunity to see the entire operation and learn more about the opportunities there including classes in business, math and English.

Valerie’s interest was fueled by the fact that so many had been impressed with her work. For the first time, through the collective efforts of teachers and administrators, the idea that she could actually do this for a living was born.

The deciding factor to begin this career came through an offer of a full scholarship from the school. “I love wood working,” said Valerie.



“It comes easy to me so I thought, why not! In two years I will be able to open my own business and do something I want to do; really all I’ve ever wanted to do since I first started in Mr. Taylor’s class.”

Valerie graduated from high school last May and is attending the Kentucky School of Craft and according to Mr. Taylor is excelling just as he knew she would.

That one magic moment was all it took to change a life. That one decision to enter a classroom has turned a thought into a dream come true for Valerie thanks to her abilities and willingness to learn and the foresight of an instructor who saw the potential in a student.



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